**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF LIBRARY COMMISSIONERS monthly regular meeting**

**Date** : Thursday, April 4, 2024

**Time** : 10:00 A.M.

**Place** : Zoom Meeting

**Board**

**Present :** Debby Conrad, Chair; Vicky Biancolo, Vice Chair; Karen Traub, Secretary; Barbara Barros; Kate Chang; Timthy Cherubini; George Comeau, Esq.; Joyce Linehan; Jessica Vilas Novas

**Staff Present:**

James Lonergan, Director; Heather Backman, Library Building Specialist; Celeste Bruno, Communications Director; Andrea Bono-Bunker, Library Building Consultant; Kate Butler, Library Information Systems Specialist; Tanesha Deane, Contract Specialist; Tracey Dimant, Head of Operations & Budget / Business Office; Ally Dowds, Consultant to Special Populations; Susan Faiella, Accountant; Rob Favini, Head of Library Advisory & Development / Government Liaison; Jen Inglis, State Aid Specialist; Rachel Masse, Assistant to the Director; Jaccavrie McNeely, Electronic Services Specialist; Uechi Ng, Administrative Assistant / State Aid; Lilli Sutton, Administrative Assistant; June Thammasnong

**Observers Present:**

Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book; Eileen Chandler, Network Administrator, Cape Libraries Automated Materials Sharing (CLAMS); Al Hayden, Acting Director, Peabody Institute Library, Peabody; Lee Ann Hooley, Head of Worcester Talking Book Library; Kathy Lussier, Network Administrator, North of Boston Library Exchange (NOBLE); Phil McNulty, Network Administrator, Minuteman Library Network; Alex Reczkowski, Library Director, Berkshire Athenaeum, Pittsfield; Brad Schmidt, Massachusetts Library System; Dave Slater, Network Administrator, Old Colony Library Network (OCLN); Angela Veizaga, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Boston Public Library

**Meeting called to order by Chair Conrad**

Chair Conrad called the meeting to order at 10:01 A.M.

**Roll Call of Commissioners**

Chair Conrad stated that she is required to take a roll call of Commissioners to comply with the Open Meeting Law for hybrid meetings.

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| Commissioner Barros- Hadn’t arrived yet | Commissioner Cherubini- Present | Commissioner Linehan- Present |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Present | Commissioner Comeau- Present | Commissioner Traub- Present |
| Commissioner Chang- Present | Commissioner Conrad- Present | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Present |

Chair Conrad explained that she would be making a motion to comply with a consent agenda. A consent agenda is a board meeting practice that groups routine motions into the consent agenda. If there are no objections, the Chair can declare a motion passed, rather than counting votes for each motion separately.

Chair Conrad moved to adopt a consent agenda for agenda items #2- Approval of Minutes- March 7, 2024 Minutes and #14- Adjournment.

Commissioner Linehan seconded.

Chair Conrad asked for a roll call vote of the Commissioners for this motion.

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| Commissioner Barros- Hadn’t arrived yet | Commissioner Cherubini- Yes | Commissioner Linehan- Yes |
| Commissioner Biancolo- Yes | Commissioner Comeau- Yes | Commissioner Traub- Yes |
| Commissioner Chang- Yes | Commissioner Conrad- Yes | Commissioner Vilas Novas- Yes |

**The motion passed.**

**Approval of Minutes from the regular monthly meeting:**

**March 7, 2024**

Chair Conrad asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the March 7, 2024 Monthly Meeting as presented.

Commissioner Comeau moved and Commissioner Linehan seconded to approve the minutes from the March 7, 2024, Regular Monthly Meeting as presented.

**Hearing no objection, Chair Conrad declared the motion passed under the consent agenda.**

**Chair’s Report**

Chair Conrad presented the following report:

In March my activities continued to be focused on advocating for the FY2025 Legislative Agenda. On March 8 I testified before the Joint Ways and Means Committee on behalf of the MBLC budget request. The hearing was held at Gloucester City Hall. It was a very long day as the Attorney General was the first speaker followed by speakers from other Secretariats. By the time it was the MBLC’s time to testify the space had to be vacated in 20 minutes. It was a very good thing that we had the opportunity on March 6 to speak at the State House Briefing about the Legislative Agenda because there was no time to go into any detail on the 8th . This is not unusual as the smaller agencies are left until the end of the day, but it does emphasize the need for our ongoing detailed advocacy prior to the Joint Ways and Means Committee Hearing.

On March 11, I attended the monthly Massachusetts Library System Executive Board meeting.

On March 15, I attended the meeting of the MLA Legislative Committee. As Rob mentioned in his legislative report, the Committee will be holding a follow-up meeting in April to evaluate the Legislative Breakfasts and is planning some ongoing advocacy events later in the spring and in the fall. On March 19 the Executive Committee met again via Zoom to develop the questions for the Director Finalists interviews being held later in April. Commissioner Biancolo will have a report from the Search Committee later in this meeting.

On March 26, I attended the MLA overview of pending library related legislation and shortly after that the monthly Executive Committee meeting. On March 27 I attended an excellent overview of the State Aid program conducted by Cate Merlin and Jennifer Inglis. It was well attended and some of the questions raised were very interesting.

I attended the final Legislative Breakfast of the season at the Holbrook Public Library on March 29. It was well attended, and I did have an opportunity to talk to several legislative aides about the Construction bond as well as our FY2025 Legislative Agenda.

Also, on March 29 I spoke to the Mass Center for the Book Strategic Planning Consultant.

**Commissioner Activities**

**Commissioner Biancolo**

* March 6-11, 2024: With the Director Search Committee, conducted second round screening interviews with selected candidates, virtual
* March 12, 2024: Chaired the final full meeting of the full Director Search Committee where the committee discussed candidates and selected three finalists, virtual
* March 19, 2024: Attended meeting of the Executive Board, virtual
* March 21, 2024: Attended meeting of CMLA, virtual
* March 26, 2024: Attended MLA legislative update, virtual
* March 26, 2024: Attended meeting of Executive Board, virtual
* March 27, 2024: Attended NEDCC dPlan/ArtsReady webinar on disaster planning, virtual
* March 27, 2024: Spoke to Dr. Erin Redihan of Salve Regina University about her upcoming research on morale and burnout among library workers in public libraries in New England.

**Commissioner Chang**

* February 23: Attended the Legislative Breakfast at the Cambridge Public Library
* March 22: Spoke at the Legislative Breakfast at the Watertown Free Public Library

**Commissioner Cherubini**

* March 9:  Took part in an open house kicking off the 150th anniversary of the David & Joyce Milne Public Library in Williamstown, MA
* March 19:  Attended the ALA virtual Town Hall session hosted by ALA President Emily Dabrinski and Interim Executive Director Leslie Burger
* March 26:  Attended the MLA Legislative Committee's virtual update on pending state legislation involving libraries
* March 27:  Attended the MBLC's virtual state aid overview presentation

**Commissioner Comeau**

* Meeting with Massachusetts Cultural Council about grants to libraries
* In local elections all 3 library trustees were reappointed to the Canton Board of Trustees.

**Commissioner Linehan**

* March 6-11, 2024: Attended the second round screening interviews with selected candidates for the Director’s Search
* March 12, 2024: Attended the final meeting of the Director Search Committee where the committee discussed candidates and selected three finalists, virtual

**Commissioner Traub**

* March 1: Director Search Committee mtg
* March 6: Legislative Briefing virtual
* March 6-12: Director Search Committee Interviews
* March 8: Wayland Legislative Breakfast
* March 12: Director Search Committee mtg
* March 12: Mass Library Trustee Association Meeting virtual
* March 12: Mass Center for the Book meeting Shrewsbury
* March 22: NOBLE legislative Breakfast- Endicott College
* March 26: MLA Legislative updates virtual
* March 26: MBLC Executive committee meeting virtual

**Commissioner Vilas Novas**

* March 28: I attended the advisory meeting for the ECCF Digital Equity committee I am on.
* April 1: I attended the ECCF Digital Equity coalition meeting with my advisory supports.
* April 2: I reviewed proposals for the next digital equity challenge taking place on 5/2 at the UMass Lowell iHub in the evening - all are welcome to attend and join me

**Commissioner Barros joined the meeting. She did not have any updates.**

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Director Lonergan presented the following report:

Meetings/activities highlights since the last monthly Board meeting:

* March 8—Joint Ways & Means Committee Hearing, Gloucester City Hall
* March 11— Massachusetts Library System (MLS) Executive Board meeting, virtual
* March 12—Massachusetts Center for the Book (MCB) executive board meeting, virtual
* March 12—Chief Officers of State Library Agencies (COSLA) and Government Accountability Office meeting on national library facility needs, virtual
* March 13—Council of State Library Agencies in the Northeast (COSLINE) meeting, virtual
* March 15— Massachusetts Library Association (MLA) Legislative Committee meeting, virtual
* March 19—CW MARS User Council meeting, virtual
* March 19—American Library Association member meeting, virtual
* March 22—Watertown Public Library Legislative Breakfast
* March 26—MLA Legislative Committee Member Update on State Legislation for Libraries, virtual
* March 26— MBLC Executive Committee meeting, virtual
* March 27—Interview for MCB Strategic Planning Process, virtual
* March 28—Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) Broadband & Digital Equity Working Group meeting, virtual
* March 28—United for Libraries Webinar: Reclaiming the Narrative: Policy Conversations that Center Community

Governor Healey has announced a “**Temporary Hiring Controls Policy**” as of April 3 through June 30. This policy does not apply to the MBLC as an independent agency.

Chair Conrad and I testified about our FY2025 Legislative Agenda/budget request in front of the **Joint Ways and Means Committee** on Friday, March 8, at Gloucester City Hall. A recording of the hearing is available at: <https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/4880> (we went on at approximately 11:30 in video 4)

The **Institute of Museum and Library Services** (IMLS) informed us that the Grants to States Program has been level-funded overall for **FY2024**. Our FY2024 award is $3,642,371 (this is $24,008 under our FY2023 allotment of $3,666,379). State allotment amounts changed slightly due to shifts in state populations and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) redistributions.

President Biden’s **FY2025** budget request calls for a cut in IMLS and LSTA funding. The president is requesting a cut of $14 million for IMLS, a cut of $7.8 million for LSTA, and a cut of $2.8 million for **LSTA Grants to States** (currently funded at $180 million).

IMLS has approved our **FY2022 State Program Report**, in which we reported on 35 projects. This annual report provides not only a full accounting about how we spent our federal funding allotment but is also an opportunity to highlight the innovative and impactful work done by our library grantees and MBLC staff.

Our Institute for Museum and Library Services Program Manager offered the following feedback: “It was a pleasure reading MA’s SPR this year. The MBLC is doing so many wonderful things, providing such wonderful services. Thank you for all you do!”

Our Program Officer focused on two of our exemplary projects: Sawyer Free Library (Gloucester)’s STEM project and the joint Outreach to the Incarcerated Community project from Belding Memorial Library (Ashfield) and Griswold Memorial Library (Colrain). Please note that both Gloucester and Colrain are finalists for the 2024 IMLS National Medal for Museum and Library Services (see below).

IMLS has [announced](https://www.imls.gov/news/imls-names-finalists-2024-national-medal-museum-and-library-service) 30 finalists for its **2024 National Medal for Museum and Library Service**, including three Massachusetts public libraries:

* Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library
* Griswold Memorial Library (Colrain)
* Worcester Public Library

Congressman Jim McGovern nominated both the Griswold Memorial Library and the Worcester Public Library for the award and Congressman Seth Moulton nominated the Gloucester Lyceum and Sawyer Free Library.

The National Medal is the nation’s highest honor given to museums and libraries “that demonstrate extraordinary and innovative approaches to public service.” Since 1994, the award has honored more than 200 institutions. The 2024 National Medal winners (five libraries and five museums) will be announced the last week of May and a national ceremony and celebration will be held in Washington, DC, in July.

**Preservation Assessment Grants:** We have received 10 applications for the Spring Preservation Assessment Grant. The output of this grant is a report written by a preservation/archival expert and outlines preservation priorities, collection threats, and access issues. The report serves as the foundation for all other direct grants in the archive and disaster recovery space. One significant change this year was an increase in the amount of the grant from $4,600 to $6,000. The increase will allow outside consultants to spend more time on the assessment and deliver a more detailed report. This year’s applications are running higher than last year’s, which could indicate an increase in direct grant applications next round.

**Digital Equity Update:** As expected, Congress did not provide the needed last-minute funding to keep the Affordable Connectivity Program operating. As a result, the program end will after May 2024. Over 600,000 Massachusetts households had been enrolled in the program that provided up to a $30 a month discount for high-speed internet connectivity. FCC ACP Wind Down Fact Sheet: <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/ACP_Wind-down_Fact_Sheet_Final.pdf>

**MBLC E Rate Consultant**: We have just passed the one-year mark working with Aleck Johnson from EdTech Strategies. As we look forward to the second year of the consulting engagement here is a recap of year 1 accomplishments:

* Held kickoff meeting and environmental scan
* Held kick off meeting with library network administrators
* Delivered 4 training webinars (5th to come) giving overview of E Rate program and application process
* Worked with Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to clean MA libraries directory records (over 125 changes identified resulting in easier application process for libraries)
* Presentations to NOBLE and OCLN on E Rate application process and fund management
* Creation of a dedicated email list to foster community and communication
* Development of a State Master Contract Guide
* Development of sample RFPs
* Engagement with individual libraries and library networks to assist in E Rate applications

These efforts contributed to an increase of funding to Massachusetts from approximately $600K to $1 million.

Lyndsay Forbes is participating in a series of learning sessions for the IMLS grant-funded project **Building Equity Based Summers**. BEBS is a national initiative focused on assisting public library staff in gaining the skills necessary to work with systematically marginalized communities. The feedback from these learning sessions will be used to adapt the content and facilitation of the project’s year 3 cohorts.

Ally Dowds completed an initial survey of public libraries to identify and describe outreach services to jails, correctional facilities, and reentry support to returning citizens. The survey gathered 47 responses from mostly public libraries from across the state. In general, the survey identified a number of libraries that actively support this population, and an indication that many more libraries are interested in starting. The survey serves as a starting point to base future programming and outreach activities.

The Communications Team worked with the **Boston Bruins** to get David Pastrnak as the summer 2024 player. “Pasta” is one of the most popular Bruins players and has set numerous records. He is featured on the Summer READ posters, player card, and outstanding reader certificate. For the first time these items are being offered in Spanish, Brazilian, Chinese (simplified), and Haitian Creole. Ordering is underway. Libraries receive the items at no cost.

Also underway is the application process for the **Blades Summer Library Visits**. New for this summer, applicants can request that the visit be in a language other than English. So far, we’ve received many applications for visits in Spanish and a few for visits in Chinese. The Communications Team worked with the Bruins to set the number of visits at 5 that will occur in late June, July, through mid-August. So far, we have received 75 applications.

April is **Financial Literacy Month** and the team worked with our ongoing partners, the **Office of Economic Empowerment**, to develop bookmarks for libraries. Over 14,000 were ordered.

The team is also currently working with the Construction Specialists to support efforts to secure the bond authorization.

**Legislative Report**

Rob Favini, Government Liaison presented the following report:

**Legislative Breakfast Recap**

Over three months the Massachusetts Library Association coordinated 16 Legislative Breakfasts across the Commonwealth from Williamstown to Barnstable. On four dates had multiple events. Average attendance clocked in at 35. Over 40 legislators and staff attended and spoke about the importance of libraries.

Many thanks go out to the Commissioners who attended and spoke so eloquently, MBLC staff who were there to answer questions from legislators and attendees, and to the MBLC Communications team for creating incredibly informative and beautiful collateral.

Having attended most of the events I was struck by how positive and supportive the attending legislators were across the board. A few takeaways:

Legislators universally voiced the recognition that libraries are anchor institutions meeting the needs of the local community far beyond recreational reading. I routinely heard terms like workforce development, early literacy, and safe space to name a few.

Budgets are a real concern. Almost every legislator acknowledged that lagging state revenues will make this budget season a challenge. At one breakfast we heard from a town manager who is struggling with level funding to meet wildly increasing costs.

Library user stories have a powerful impact. This year I heard stories from three distinctive voices from the library community. A new arrival to America, a grade 8 student, and a stay-at-home father. Each told a wildly different narrative of what brought them to the library, but each had the same theme. The library provides a lifeline, a safe place, and a sense of community when it was needed most.

**MLA Legislative Committee Next Steps**

The Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee met to discuss next steps to follow the Legislative Breakfast season. The committee will be focusing on the following:

* Holding a Legislative Breakfast debrief in April to bring breakfast hosts and participants together to talk about what worked and what didn't; plan for next year's events; set a Fall date for a Legislative Breakfast FAQ/how to event.
* Hold a Coalition Building event with [EveryLibrary](https://www.everylibrary.org/) .In this skill building seminar attendees will learn how to build coalitions and partnerships.
* Hold a Legislator Thank You event in May.
* Hold a Fall seminar / mini conference / half day program to talk about all things advocacy.

**Freedom to Read Legislation Update**

[S2528](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/S2528)/[H4229](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4229), Senator Cyr and Representative Moran’s *An Act Regarding Free Expression* was discharged to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development on March 25, 2024. Often bills are moved due to committee capacity and scheduling issues. However, committee staff indicated that the move could result in a consolidation and harmonization of similar bills now that they are all in the same committee.

All freedom to read and eBook legislation remain in committee with reporting dates extended to June 1, 2024.

**Construction Bond Legislation**

The MBLC’s construction bond request of $150,000,000 is included in Governor Healey’s [H4459](https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H4459): An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts’ Economic Leadership. The bill sits in the [Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies](https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J12/193).

Committee members of note:

The following committee members represent districts where construction grant application letters of intent have been submitted:

* Sen. Susan Moran – Falmouth
* Sen. Joanne Comerford – Montague
* Sen. Adam Gomez – Springfield

Sen. John Cronin’s district includes a current construction project in Fitchburg.

Rep. Brian Murray of the Legislative Library Caucus also serves on the committee.

**Report from the Director’s Search Committee**

Commissioner Biancolo, Search Committee Chair presented the following update on the Director’s Search.

The Search Committee wrapped up second round interviews on March 11, and on March 12 we met to select finalists. We had the happy responsibility of talking to a group of candidates who were well-qualified, passionate library leaders, so each step in the process was more difficult than the last. In the end, the Committee selected 3 finalists to interview before the full board.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank the members of the Search Committee and the MBLC staff for their incredible work. The Committee was made up of experienced library leaders from across the state, and every one of them contributed substantially to the work with insight and empathy. We have the finalists we have because of this marvelous group, and because of the work of Tracey Dimant and Rachel Masse.

Tracey answered my seemingly endless questions and provided extraordinarily helpful guidance and direction as we moved through the process. Rachel organized and scheduled the many meetings, kept us to our tight timeline, tracked down helpful information, and even went out of her way to do just the right thing to perk up the committee chair when her spirits flagged a bit.

I will end by stating that Commissioners Linehan, Traub and I are satisfied with the finalist candidates and are looking forward to concluding the process in April and celebrating with our new director.

**Update on the 2023-2024 Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) Grant Round and the bond bill**

Andrea Bono-Bunker, Library Building Consultant gave the following report:

1. The Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program (MPLCP) has been in existence and has run without interruption since 1987. In that time, the MBLC has awarded a total of 253 municipalities with over $500 million in grants for 236 library construction projects and almost $3 million in grants for 98 planning and design projects.
2. There are 3 projects currently under construction, 3 projects currently out to bid, and 2 projects at the final planning phase before groundbreaking from the 2016-2017 grant round.
3. The 2023-2024 competitive grant round elicited engagement from approximately 50 libraries, with 27 submitting letters of intent in April 2023. Applications are due on May 31, 2024, and awards are to be announced in October 2024.
4. Since the last grant round seven years ago, significant changes have been made to the [MPLCP regulations](https://mblc.state.ma.us/programs-and-support/construction/files/MPLCP-regs-final-2022.pdf) to streamline the process, reduce the waitlist, and combat climate change:
   1. One pared-down application, **reducing the up-front cost for municipalities**
   2. Reduction of the grant process timeline by two years, **mitigating escalation impact**
   3. **More assistance to municipalities with smaller populations** and capacity with a Small Population Grant Type for municipal populations less than 2,500
   4. **Greater emphasis on economic and community need** in scoring applications, and need-based increases to base grant awards
   5. Three pathways to obtain the **Green Library Incentive**, which rewards libraries for constructing eco-friendly buildings
   6. Regulations and design guidelines supporting **resilience, renewable energy, and the elimination of fossil fuel usage**
5. With a competitive program that awards a small number of waitlisted libraries, the hopeful result is **a more predictable grant cycle** that assists municipalities in their capital planning efforts. The purpose of the waitlist is to maximize the number of projects completed in a grant round, as waitlisted libraries can replace projects unable to secure local funding. However, all will be funded when the cap allows.

**What we need**

1. To continue the program and to award projects from the 2023-2024 competitive grant round, the MBLC needs a new bond authorization by October 2024 to fund awarded projects through completion of the Construction Phase.
2. In addition to the $150 million in new bond funds, the MBLC is requesting an increase in the annual bond cap by $1 million each fiscal year.
3. Without this requested annual spending increase, the MBLC will be forced to award less immediately funded projects than in previous grant rounds and delay the small number of waitlisted libraries.

**What you can do**

Share this information with your Trustees, Friends, Building Committee Members, local municipal officials and other library building advocates and ask them to contact State Representatives and Senators for your District.

**Please keep in mind:**

The MPLCP has assisted over 70% of the Commonwealth’s municipalities with planning and design and construction funding since its inception. Over 50% of those projects are nearing 30 years since completion, which means changes to population, services, infrastructure, and climate could translate to the need for further expansions or new construction in addition to those libraries that have never participated in the MPLCP.

These projects not only create construction jobs in local communities during the library building phase, but their municipalities also continue to see economic growth in the areas surrounding the new or renovated library facility long after the projects are completed. You can learn more about the transformational impact recently completed projects have had on their communities on the [Building Literacy: Public Library Construction podcast](https://www.buzzsprout.com/995062).

**Quarterly Report from the Massachusetts Center for the Book**

Courtney Andree, Executive Director, Massachusetts Center for the Book provided the following report:

The Massachusetts Center for the Book has a busy spring ahead, with strategic planning underway and the launch of the Mass Kids Lit Festival, in addition to our regular activities around Letters About Literature and the Massachusetts Book Awards, and a range of conferences and special events.

**Strategic Planning**

MCB is on track to complete our new strategic plan by the summer months. A stakeholder survey was distributed to the library community, educators, publishers, booksellers, and authors in February, with strong participation. Over 150 responses have been collected thus far, and we are currently preparing surveys aimed at program participants and members of the general public. Focus groups are being planned for the library community and for Massachusetts educators for later this spring, our consultant is currently scheduling stakeholder interviews with key members of the library and cultural communities in Massachusetts, and Mass Center for the Book board and staff will convene for a planning session in mid-April.

**Letters About Literature**

Submissions to this statewide 4th–12th grade writing initiative closed in January, with a 9% increase over last year. After temporary setbacks during the pandemic years, as classroom life and routines were upended, we were happy to see participation rebound. Last month, we met with the other state Centers for the Book that are continuing to run Letters About Literature and were heartened by the conversation. Massachusetts’ participation numbers are the highest out of any state program operating today. We plan to recruit actively over the summer months and pursue outreach to educators and school libraries, in the hope that the program can become even stronger.

The awards ceremony has been scheduled for May 21 at the Massachusetts State House—our first in-person recognition ceremony in five years. Representative Lindsay Sabadosa will offer a legislative welcome at the event, and *New York Times-*bestselling author Lynda Mullaly Hunt will speak and sign complimentary copies of her book, *Shouting at the Rain,* for honorees. This year’s judges include children’s author Josh Funk, children’s book publisher Betsy Groban, and Worcester Public Library’s children’s services librarian Alicia Rogers. Interested students and families will have the opportunity to join us for a guided tour of the State House prior to the ceremony.

**Mass Kids Lit Fest**

Mass Kids Lit Fest is coming together nicely and we’re now at the promotion phase. Events have been scheduled in conjunction with libraries, public schools, museums, and nonprofits around Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties over the course of Children’s Book Week, May 6–12. The full schedule is available at [makidslitfest.org](https://www.makidslitfest.org/) and you’ll find the Festival press release attached.

* Partners include over a dozen public libraries across the region, including Belchertown, Easthampton, Florence, Greenfield, Holyoke, Longmeadow, Ludlow, Northampton, Northfield, South Hadley, Southwick, Sunderland, and Ware.
* We’ve organized author visits with two public schools—a bilingual elementary school in Springfield, Gerena Community School, is hosting *NYT-*bestselling author Raúl the Third and Sunderland Elementary will host Carrie Finison.
* Girls Inc. of the Valley, a community nonprofit serving youth in the Holyoke and Springfield areas, will host a writing workshop with YA novelist Crystal Maldonado. We’ve also scheduled a comics-writing workshop with the Children’s Museum at Holyoke featuring Jarrett Lerner, and organized a panel discussion featuring picture book authors who engage with immigration and the refugee experience in their books. That event, “Kidlit Beyond Borders,” will feature Rajani LaRocca, Mary Wagley Copp, and Hannah Moushabeck. Other partners include the Yiddish Book Center and the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.
* We’ve worked to engage Western Massachusetts legislators around the Festival, letting them know about events happening across their districts. Several plan to participate and attend events. Representative Pat Duffy and Senator John Velis will be special guests at their local libraries during Festival week to host storytime.

**Upcoming Events/Activities**

**April**

[WriteAngles conference](https://writeanglesconference.com/2024-conference/program/), organized panel: “The Life of a Book,” April 6, 2024, Northampton, MA

[Reading Challenge hybrid event](https://weymouth.assabetinteractive.com/calendar/hold-for-possible-center-for-the-book-event/) featuring MA graphic novelists Phoebe Potts, Sivan Piatigorskyu-Roth, and Joel Christian Gill, in partnership with the Tufts Library, April 11, 2024, Weymouth, MA

[Northampton Lit Walk](https://forbeslibrary.org/events/noholiterarywalk/), co-organized with the Forbes Library, April 20, 2024, Northampton, MA

[Newburyport Literary Festival](https://newburyportliteraryfestival.org/), MCB-organized session featuring Ilyon Woo in conversation with Caleb Gayle, April 26-28, Newburyport, MA

**May**

[Mass Kids Lit Fest](https://www.makidslitfest.org/), May 6–12, 2024

[Mass Library Association conference](https://masslibraryconference.org/schedule2024/), MCB-organized panel: “Expanding Literary Horizons: Hosting a Reading Challenge to Foster Diverse Reading Habits,” May 6-7, 2024.

Greater Roxbury Book Fair, May 18, 2024, Roxbury Branch of the Boston Public Library

Letters About Literature Recognition Ceremony, May 21, 2024, Massachusetts State House

**June**

[Boston Kids Comics Fest](https://bostonkidscomicsfest.org/), sponsored discussion with MA children’s author Colleen AF Venable, June 8, 2024, Boston, MA

**Report from Massachusetts Library System**

**Strategic Initiative 1**

**MLS ensures its services are sustainable, prioritize member needs, and equitably serve all member types.**

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| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS ensures service value to all member types. | MLS will create new avenues for active member engagement, including task forces, class leaders, and project engagements. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the number of active member engagements.* | Changes made by the new School Library Membership Policy are being implemented.  Sarah Sogigian and Rob Favini (MBLC) launched their 2024 Road Trip program  Two Masscat public library members (Huntington and Becket) have signed contracts to join C/WMARS, with support from MLS. |
| MLS will continue to strengthen its partnerships and collaborations to allow MLS to focus on what it does uniquely well. | Utilizing the newly created partnership policy and process, MLS will explore possible partnership work with the Library for the Commonwealth and other organizations. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the value of their partnerships.* | We launched the five-part webinar series with ALA on intellectual freedom topics. Three webinars occurred in February with 176 participants at the live events and 94 views of the recordings. Two additional webinars will occur in March. Recordings of the webinars will be available for 18 months.  We continued working with MBLC and other organizations to host a webinar series on mental health supports and libraries. One webinar occurred in February and two will occur in March.  Staff from MLS, MBLC, public libraries, and other New England state libraries began the *Touchpoints for Libraries* train- the-trainer program to teach the Touchpoints program to Massachusetts library staff. The training will continue in March.  We continued working with other New England states on this year’s Summer Summit, to help libraries prepare for the youth and adult summer library program. The event is scheduled for March 31. |
| New services will be designed to deliver the greatest statewide impact, able to expand and contract due to available funding and need. | MLS will evaluate current, new, and proposed services using a new internal service review process. | *MLS will ensure that services are able to expand and contract due to available funding, need, and capacity.* |  |

# **Strategic Initiative 2**

**MLS empowers leaders to emerge at every level of library service, connecting staff throughout the stages of their careers.**

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| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS promotes excellence and continuity by providing professional development, conversation, and community around leadership. | Together with our partners, MLS will lead the planning of learning opportunities on leadership and management topics and ensure networking options in our engagements. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the leadership and management learning opportunities hosted and the reflection from participants.* | We scheduled a series of four workshops with the Employers Association of the NorthEast on HR topics relevant for libraries (employment Law, interviewing, performance management, and documentation skills). They will take place March through May.  We are working with EANE to schedule four community chats on HR related topics. |
| Leadership, professional development, and networking opportunities will have flexible offerings in order to include participants from various library types, library sizes, and resources. | MLS will explore the creation of grants and/or scholarship opportunities to support member library staff in their professional development work. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the number of opportunities available, awarded, and the reflection from participants.* | We launched the Language Learning Grant program and approved 20 applications in February. |

# **Strategic Initiative 3**

**MLS will take the lead in facilitating important conversations, and support member-facing initiatives focused on DEI: diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and social justice.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Goal | Actions | Measurement of Success | **Monthly work towards goal** |
| MLS will integrate the core values of diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and social justice into its policies, practices, procedures, and programs. | Utilizing learnings from our work last year, MLS will continue its review of documents, resources and practices to ensure they align with core values.  In partnership with trusted experts, MLS will begin an accessibility audit of MLS services. | *MLS will demonstrate both increased resource allocation as well as substantive, visible progress in representation throughout MLS services.* |  |
| Following the lead of trusted experts, MLS will build awareness in using the DEI tenets with member library staff to identify and eliminate barriers to inclusive library services. | Utilizing established services, MLS will showcase member libraries that are using the core values of DEI within their communities. | *MLS will report to member libraries on an annual basis the DEI learning opportunities hosted and the reflection from participants.* |  |

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**NEW BUSINESS**

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 A.M.



Karen Traub

Secretary